

October 2, 2000

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Honorable Donna Shalala  
Secretary of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S. W.  
Room #615F  
Washington, D. C. 20201

Dear Secretary Shalala:

The Food and Drug Administration may shortly propose changes to the way hearing aids are sold that could impede access to hearing care services for millions of our nation's seniors. This would be a mistake. As the AARP's new hearing aid guide reports: only about 20% of the nation's 28 million hearing impaired, who could benefit from a hearing aid, actually use one.

I am a state-licensed audiologist. For many years, I have provided hearing health care services to hundreds of our state's hearing-impaired. Presently all three members of the hearing health care delivery team (hearing aid specialists, audiologists and physicians) are recognized as qualified entry points into the hearing health care delivery system. The rule FDA is advocating could, by allowing the states to determine who is qualified to test hearing and fit hearing aids, impede access by eliminating one or more of these three entry points.

Allowing any one provider "gatekeeper" status, without unqualified medical data evidencing that such role is necessary for public health reasons, would severely undermine public health and safety, impeded access to needed hearing health care services and increase costs to the hearing impaired. — especially in rural healthcare areas.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

*Sandra Hobson*  
Sandra Hobson

Credentials

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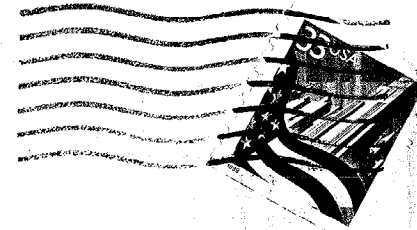
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*DONOT micromanage in dictating which tests need to be used since new research being released is giving us better tools all the time!*

*C4632*

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